

TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)

Verification and Capacity Needs Assessment of Workers' Organizations in Aquaculture, Plastics, and Leather Supply Chains

1. Background and Context

The International Labour Organization (ILO), in partnership with the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), is implementing interventions to strengthen workers' organizations and promote decent work in key supply chains. A critical prerequisite for effective intervention is an evidence-based understanding of the current landscape of workers' organizations. Currently, there is a need to compare official registration records maintained by the Department of Labour (DoL) against the reality on the ground.

The **aquaculture, plastics, and leather** sectors have been specifically targeted for this exercise due to their critical importance to Bangladesh's economy. Together, these sectors are major drivers of export earnings, industrial growth, and mass employment, particularly for vulnerable and low-income populations. However, these supply chains are also characterized by complex labor dynamics, including high rates of informal and contract work, occupational health and safety risks, and fragmented workforces. In such environments, robust, independent, and capable workers' organizations are essential to safeguard labor rights, ensure fair wages, and promote decent work.

To address the gap between official records and ground realities, three (03) field-level mapping exercises will be conducted in the concentrated areas of these three sectors. The assignment aims to verify the existence of registered trade unions, identify unregistered organizations, associations, and cooperatives, and assess the institutional health, independence, and capacity needs of these

e entities.

2. Objectives of the Assignment

The primary objectives of this assignment are to:

1. Verify the actual existence and operational status of registered workers' organizations in the three target sectors by cross-referencing DoL records with ground realities.
2. Identify and document unregistered workers' organizations, associations, and cooperatives operating in the target supply chains.
3. Assess the institutional health, independence, and capacity gaps of existing organizations to inform future training and institutional support designs.

4. Validate the findings with key sectoral stakeholders to ensure accuracy and buy-in.

3. Scope of Work

The Consultant will be responsible for carrying out the following tasks:

Task 1: Baseline Data Extraction

- Extract the full set of registered trade unions in the aquaculture, leather, and plastics sectors from the DoL's public registration database.
- Disaggregate the data by sector, division, and district, including registration numbers and years.
- Share this structured baseline dataset with the BILS prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

Task 2: Field Mapping and Verification of Existence

- Conduct field visits to the specific concentration areas of each sector (e.g., Khulna/Chattogram/Coastal districts for aquaculture; specific industrial belts for leather and plastics to be specified before starting the field work).
- Establish which registered organizations exist in practice through consultations with relevant federations and direct field visits.
- Classify each registered organization as **active, dormant, or non-existent**, documenting the basis for each classification.
- Identify, document, and profile any unregistered organizations, associations, and cooperatives encountered during the fieldwork.

Task 3: Assessment of Union Health and Independence

For every organization verified as existing, the Consultant must gather information against a standardized checklist covering a minimum of the following six areas:

1. **Leadership and governance:** Functioning executive committee, date of last election, adherence to constitutional election schedules, leadership turnover, and affiliation to national centers/sectoral federations (including the nature of support received).
2. **Independence:** Process of leadership selection, history of dismissal of elected leaders and relationship with enterprise management.
3. **Membership:** Size, composition, proportion of women, dues collection mechanisms, and record-keeping practices.

4. **Activity:** Collective bargaining history, Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) status, grievances handled, and meetings held in the past 12 months.
5. **Priorities:** Pressing issues identified by the organization itself, reasons for these priorities, and potential constraints in realizing them.
6. **Capacity gaps:** Self-identified training and institutional support needs.

Task 4: Sectoral Consultation Meetings

Organize and conduct **three (03) consultation meetings**, one for each sector (aquaculture, plastics, leather), engaging sectoral trade union leaders to discuss preliminary mapping findings, sector-specific challenges, and organizational priorities.

Task 5: Validation Workshop and Final Reporting

- Facilitate a **validation workshop** (representing the stakeholders from three sectors, including union leaders, federation representatives, and relevant project partners).
- Incorporate input and feedback from the workshop into the final comprehensive report.
- Produce a consolidated capacity needs matrix usable for future training design.

4. Methodology

The Consultant must propose and adhere to a detailed methodology, which must explicitly specify:

- The number of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) per sector.
- The number and composition of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).
- The number of field visits and the specific districts/concentration areas covered per sector.
- The sequencing and timeline of the fieldwork.

Note: Sector concentration areas must be named explicitly in the inception report (e.g., Khulna/Chattogram/other districts for aquaculture).

5. Instruments for BILS Review and Clearance

Before any fieldwork begins, the Consultant must submit the following instruments to BILS for review and clearance. All instruments must be submitted in both English and Bangla, as they will be used directly in the field:

1. **Methodology Note:** Detailing the sampling approach, respondent selection, and fieldwork sequence.
2. **Organization Profile Form:** A structured data sheet to be completed for each verified organization, covering the 6-point checklist (Leadership, Independence, Membership, Activity, Priorities, Capacity gaps).
3. **Key Informant Interview (KII) Guides.**
4. **Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guides.**

6. Deliverables and Timeline

The Consultant will deliver the following outputs within the agreed timeframe:

No.	Deliverable	Timeline
1.	Inception Report & Methodology Note: Including detailed work plan, named concentration areas, and proposed tools	By week 1
2.	Field Instruments: Methodology note, Org profile form, KII guides, and FGD guides for BILS and ILO clearance.	By week 2
3.	Baseline Dataset: Structured, editable dataset of registered TUs extracted from the DoL database.	By week 2
4.	Draft Analytical Report & Verification Dataset: Sector-disaggregated editable dataset; draft report presenting registry-vs-reality findings, health/independence assessment, and draft capacity needs matrix.	By week 8
5.	Consultation & Validation Workshops: Conduct 3 sectoral consultation meetings and 1 validation workshop . Submit workshop documentation and feedback integration report.	By week 10
6.	Final Comprehensive Report: Incorporating all feedback, including the final consolidated capacity needs matrix for training design.	By week 11

*(Note: Exact weeks/dates to be finalized during contract negotiation). *

7. Qualifications and Requirements

The ideal Consultant/Firm should possess:

- Advanced degree in Labor Studies, Social Sciences, Development Studies, or a related field.
- Proven experience in mapping trade unions, workers' organizations, and labor supply chains in Bangladesh.
- Strong understanding of the Bangladesh Labor Act, trade union registration processes, and the Department of Labour's operational frameworks.

- Demonstrated experience in conducting qualitative research (KIIs, FGDs) and facilitating stakeholder validation workshops.
- Excellent analytical, report writing, and presentation skills in both English and Bangla.

8. Time Frame

The total study period will be 3 months, commencing from the signing of the contract for this assignment, and will end on or 31 December 2026.

9. Payment And the Modality

The consultant is requested to propose a practical & outcome-based budget to BILS in the financial proposal. The payment will be made on receipt of the services, through the following process;

On signing the agreement	50% of the total payment
On receipt of final service	50% of the total payment

***VAT/TAX will be deducted at source, in accordance with Government Rules

10. Reporting and Management

The Consultant will report directly to the coordinator. Check-in meetings will be held to review progress, particularly during the inception phase and prior to the commencement of fieldwork. All raw data, datasets, and translated tools will remain the property of the BILS.

11.General Terms and Conditions

a. Copyright:

All data and information received from BILS and other stakeholders for the purpose of this study are to be treated confidentially and are only to be used in connection with the execution of this ToR. The contents of written materials obtained and used in this contract may not be disclosed to any third parties without the expressed advance written authorization of BILS. BILS reserves the right to change or make any modification in the report as necessary.

b. Termination of the contract:

▪The contract shall be terminated at the expiry of the deadlines mentioned in the contract. But before the expiry, either party may terminate the contract by giving 7 days' notice in writing to the other party.

- If the service delivered is unsatisfactory or fails to conform to the conditions set out above, BILS reserves the right, if it seems necessary, to terminate the contract with a written notice 7 days before the expiration date of the contract.

12.Proposal Submission Procedure

Interested consultants are requested to submit technical and financial proposals to Executive Director, Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies - BILS, Razzak Villa, (1st and 4th floor) House - 8/A/Ka, Road-13 (new), Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1209 or through email: office@bilsbd.org by **September 24, 2026 (CoB)**.